



Elements of Technique

Most people consider Waza's and Techniques synonymous. Technically, a Waza is a (set or group), of methods (Tekubi, Nage, Shime, etc) by which an individual *Uke* is controlled. Within each (set or group) are several ways and methods by which *Tori* can execute that control and are known as techniques. All techniques within a Waza group involve many principles (physics in application) and directions (force of angles & degree changes) by which *Uke* is controlled. Each principle and direction must be understood and applied correctly to be effective, *but more importantly, how both are executed as one.*

Besides learning all waza's or techniques listed, there are several other elements that need to be taught which by themselves are not considered to be techniques or waza's, but are crucial in the execution of a technique. Besides exercises and dojo etiquette, the following are those elements that must be applied to each and every technique. *It's the responsibility of the dojo Sensei to explain the reasons for each element in relation to a technique no matter what the waza, looking for mistakes and making corrections. Accuracy from the beginning stops bad habits!*

1. **STANCES:** The every day normal (or relaxed) stance or posture is passive or weak in nature and can catch anyone off guard or balance! Shobudo has three main defensive stances of which most if not all techniques will be executed from. From the Normal or Relaxed Stance, the three defensive stances are as follows;



(a) **Normal Relaxed Stance:** Actually, this is the stance that will dictate which of the three defensive stances one will go into based upon the attack of one's opponent or *Uke*! **NOTE:** When a situation arises that could implicate a dangerous outcome, stay in the passive or relaxed position but keep alert *keeping the 3-foot distance rule!* This passive stance will give your aggressor the impression that you don't know anything. The three defensive stances will come into play once the aggressor commits himself. At that micro-moment, you will go into the stance that is required for that particular attack! The three defensive stances are as follows;



(1) **Regular Defense Stance:** Feet wider (at least shoulder width) and in depth. Rear leg straight, front leg bent and toes pointing forward ... used upon going into most techniques and for kicks.



(2) **T-Stance:** Quick movement in any direction especially 180 & 360 degrees ... used to execute most techniques of all waza's. Also back movement against boxer etc. Backward & forward movement executed like that in fencing. Rear leg straight, front leg bent.



(3) **Horse Stance:** Used for most Judo type throws and grabs from behind (leverage locking holds) ... hips or buttocks must make contact with *Uke* in order to be effective, back remains straight and slightly leaning forward. Heels close together, Feet & knees bent at a 45degree angle. **NOTE:** *Also against grappler, but feet wider apart.*

2. **POSTURE:** Correct body form, essential for good technique. Back straight, forward knee bent, back leg straight, head upright and eyes focused forward and 180 peripheral. Posture and stance must work together as one.
3. **DEAD WEIGHT:** Focus solid and heavy downward from *Hara*. With body working as one unit, your dead weight must be executed at the very end of all techniques. The principle(s) of *Ki* are an important part of dead weight, and is a must for the execution of all techniques.
4. **FOOTWORK:** To avoid, counter and attack *Uke*, it's crucial that movements are smooth, quick and precise. Besides proper stance and movement in all eight directions of alertness or the cardinal points of a compass ... see (*Happo Zanshin*). **Special note:** *Good footwork is only half of a good technique!*

5. **EXTENSION:** Extending beyond a point of focus to create penetration. This application is most evident when striking with the elbow. Point of impact must be at the tip of the elbow, not from the shoulder to the elbow. Also in wristlocks, extending your wrist over and beyond *Uke's* wrist, you create an over balance or added leverage to *Uke*. This is also dead weight, which makes the technique much easier to execute.
6. **TRIANGLE:** Besides blocking, punching and kicking ... most if not all other techniques involve the application of the triangle. Whether small as used in wrist techniques, or a choke or large in a hip throw, triangles are the foundation of Wrestling, Judo and Jitsu's.
7. **SUCTION:** A seemingly unimportant element in applying a technique. I assure you that it is one of the most important when being grasped by the wrist, arm, shoulder, chest or other parts of the body. *Example:* When grasped by the wrist and starting to apply a wristlock, your aggressor will pull away his grasp, weakening the lock or escaping altogether! *By applying your free hand on top of your aggressor's hand and applying pressure or suction in order for him not to pull away, your lock will be tight, painful and secure!* This applies to all techniques when being grasped.
8. **RIGHT & WRONG:** For every technique a better way is always possible but for sure there is a wrong way! For this reason, you must teach both ways in order to clarify any doubts!
9. **WEAK POINTS:** No matter how good a technique, somewhere within lies a critical weak point that can be countered! Here again you must point out and critique this area to clarify any doubts. In addition, for every counter there is a counter so in essence ... *there is a counter within a counter!* These counters must be practiced for each and every technique ... without them you are limited and defeat will soon prevail.
10. **TIMING:** *Crucial to every technique, timing is critical.* In most situations, one must wait until the very last microsecond before movement is executed. By doing so you will blend in with your aggressor's *point of no return* and flow into a natural technique which will be a total surprise to your aggressor.
11. **CIRCLES:** Besides hard blocks, parries, strikes and kicks, 90% of all techniques are made up of circles. This applies to techniques with or without the use of weapons. From small circle applications to the wrist or large circles of the body for throws, circles are extremely important. Utilizing circles in footwork, hand and arm movements in executing any given technique, *there are large and small circles as well as circles within circles* plus direction changes that are going on at the same time during a technique.
12. **KI:** Of all the elements, principles, controls and combined applications that make up a technique, *Ki* is the hardest to develop and apply, but is the most important of all principles. *Without it, one must rely on physical strength in order to execute all techniques.* For details on *Ki*, see ... *Elements of KI.*

Conclusion: In many arts, most students do not know or understand what is involved that constitutes a technique other than just going through its movements! Learning any one of hundreds of techniques is fine but realizing all the fine points and applying them together as one to each and every waza, one's performance will be at its best! As for the above elements (besides *Ki*), *one is no more important than the other but equal as one.* As you can see, good technique is made up of many things, which cannot be learned or felt from books or videos. ***Time on the mat with a teacher that knows and understands the in-depth and fine points will make you the best you can be!***



In Budo,

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